

Now Hear This! *The Other Half of Clear Communication*

The other half of speaking well is listening carefully. In fact, if you want to be heard, listen! Family and friends are more likely to turn to someone they know will listen to them. A good listener:

- pays attention.
- asks questions.
- thinks about how the speaker feels
- is patient.
- responds without judgment.

Smirk, Smile, Shrug and Slouch

You listen in your own style. You may repeat "yeah," "uh huh," "go on," or "I see" to signal that you are concentrating. You may cross and uncross your arms or legs as tension ebbs and flows. You shrug can say, "So what?" or "I understand."

A good listener lets the speaker know he or she is there with them. Paying attention to what is said guards against daydreams, impatience or other distractions. It pays off in new knowledge, understanding and love.



When you listen, you will be heard.

Using Your Mind's Spare Time

You can listen at about twice the speed the average person talks. That's why it can be hard to stick with it, especially if you're tired. Use the time between hearing words to get the most you can from the conversation. Think about:

- ? What's behind the words?
- ? What's expected of me?
- ? How accurate is the information?
- ? Is there something missing?

- ? Is there a way to put this together?
- ? What new thing am I hearing?

You can't always control the timing when someone needs to be heard. You may be tired or in the middle of chores. You may feel needy yourself. Good listening requires time without distraction. When possible, schedule important talks during the time periods that you can control. Let others know you don't want to be disturbed.

Careful Listening Checklist

Here are 10 ways you can improve your listening process:

1. Take time or schedule time.
2. Eliminate distractions.
3. Look at the speaker.
4. Nod or make neutral comments.
5. Question without interruption.
6. Be patient.
7. Respond without judgment.
8. Note emphasis on words, loudness, or speed of speech to check the speaker's state of mind.
9. Repeat what you think was said. Ask about feelings.
10. Help the speaker find his or her own way.

Your Listening Shows Them How

Children learn their listening style by how they are treated. Be paying attention or excusing yourself with a good reason, you can help them learn what listening is all about. Good listening skills pay off in school, work and personal relationships.

